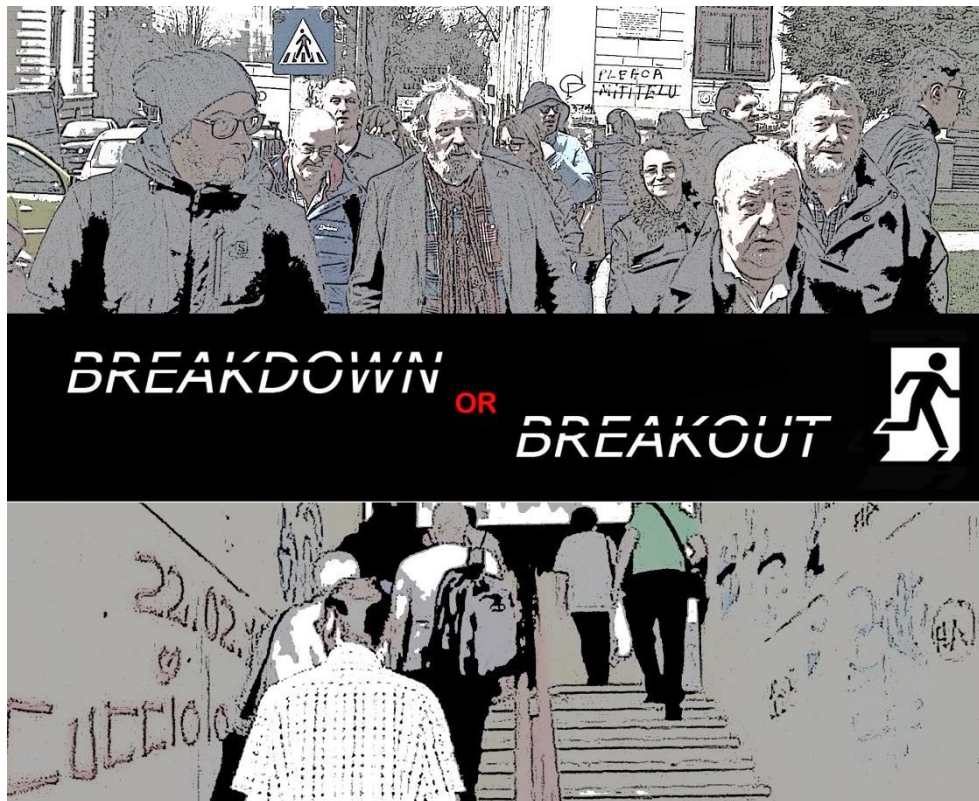Erasmus+

BREAK DOWN OR BREAK OUT 2014-16
Capacity building for taking community action for long-term unemployed

TOWARDS A PARADIGM SHIFT IN ADULT ~~EDUCATION~~

A new language for adult ~~education~~?

SUMMARY

This critical paper is a contribution, based on the project experience and documentation, to the methodological debates on innovation in adult ~~education~~, especially addressing the involvement and engagement of what is called hard-to-reach adults.
The paper is based on and generated from the project's documentation of its wide range of practices, opening up a wider perspective of empowering hard-to-reach-adults, and linking to the Commission's adult education innovation and entrepreneurship policy and strategies.
The paper is organised in two parts: Part 1 discusses a possible paradigm shift in adult ~~education~~, including the driving roles of the unemployed adults themselves; Part 2 discusses how this paradigm shift will need a new language, a new discourse.

Part 1

A paradigm shift

Part 1 questions the basic paradigms of adult education, labour market services and empowermental measures – outlining in what directions capacity building of unemployed and less educated citizens should go in globalised Europe.
It promotes approaches fully in line with key Commission strategies, such as re-thinking education, open schooling and entrepreneurial education.

Thus Part 1 points towards the shift from services offered by various stakeholders to engagement in entrepreneurial eco-systems in the communities, opening up a wide range of taking change action for adult learners.

This includes focusing also on a shift from limited punctual change management to capacity building for general change management.

When talking about "adults" in this paper, it is implied that we are talking about less educated adults, not adults in general.
Thus adult education or learning refers to any form of formal, non-formal or informal learning need after basic schooling and across the life circles of mature adults.

> "Studies on the future of work show that future career histories may increasingly reveal switches between employment and self-employment, and periods of continuing training and unemployment."
> Eickhoff *Entrepreneurial thinking and action – an educational responsibility for Europe*

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

What we know as "adult education" will need to change dramatically in 21st century globalised Europe.
The Commission knows that, as demonstrated across a wide range of publications, but local, regional and national policy is not at all following Commission policy and calls for innovation.

Most adult education measures are stuck in industrial or post-industrial paradigms, not seriously moving towards what adults need to manage constantly changing 21st century work and life.

Traditional adult education is embedded in the following paradigms:

1
Adult education as enlightenment of workers to be full citizens (the Grundtvig paradigm)

2
Adult education as development of general competences among workers and less educated adults (the literacy paradigm)

3
Adult education as personal empowerment (the post-industrial paradigm)

4
Adult education as vocational upskilling to close labour market gaps (the instrumental paradigm)

Each of these approaches might have positive effect on adults, also today.

However, the paradigms do not match the real-life situation of less educated adults in 21st century Europe, and they certainly do not match the challenges of future generations of less educated adults.

Why the urgent need for a paradigm shift?

Let's <u>summarise</u> policy and research findings from the Commission, from the OECD and from leading adult education research into what we will call the 3 global justifications of the need for a paradigm shift:

FIRST GLOBAL JUSTIFICATION
Due to high-speed economic and societal changes, in which change takes place in a curve-linear movement, in the globalised world, it is impossible to foresee or predict any kind of stable labour market, occupation or career path for an increasing number of less educated adults.
This tendency will be reinforced in the near and far futures.

SECOND GLOBAL JUSTIFICATION
This puts an increasing focus on the acquisition of general competences and on a new meta-competence: change management.
The development and acquisition of such change capacity will take place along the adults' entire mature life circle, not on certain or identifiable occasions.
Therefore such capacity building addressing change management, entrepreneurial orientation, technology fluency and initiative-taking are imminent.

THIRD GLOBAL JUSTIFICATION
This will generate needs for new forms of delivery of capacity building, new forms of situations in which capacity building can take place.
The traditional top-down delivery of educational content (from academia) will become obsolete and needs to be replaced by dynamic eco-systems of capacity building, closely linked to real-life, real-time and innovative missions within a variety of collaborative structures.
The less educated adult will shift from an object of academia based delivery to a subject of constant change management.

Let's try to bring together some of the key elements in such a paradigm shift, then.
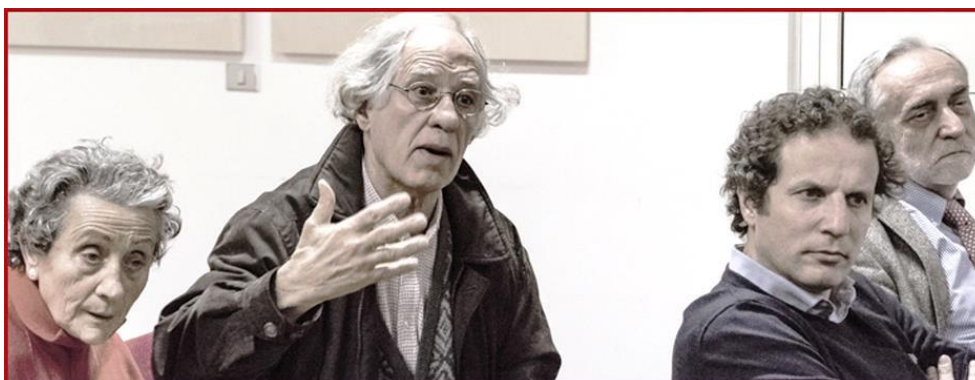
KEY ELEMENTS IN A NEW ADULT EDUCATION PARADIGM

Let us describe, in a first attempt to understand the paradigm shift needed, some of the key elements in a new adult education paradigm.

From an *epistemological* point of view, it is important to make crystal clear that such paradigms do not remain untouched by the rapidly changing globalised economy: new paradigms must therefore reflect the object that constitutes the paradigms and must dynamically change its discourse, vocabulary and mechanics according to the changes in the globalised economy.

This means that the shift in paradigm is not a shift from one solid paradigm to another.
On the contrary, the new paradigm is also a new form of "paradigm", as it must reflect constant change.
This is one of the reasons that academia will become obsolete as a provider of capacity building. Academia changes extremely slowly and is deeply dependent on its own power systems.
The paradigm shift therefore require new forms of capacity building "delivery", taking place in medias res where the changes take place.

In fact we can widen this critical approach to academia and to adult education delivery to encompass what we can call the "institutional world", this time including public authorities, educations and most NGO institutions depending on public funding and therefore of public policy.
This critical approach is expected to generate considerable resistance in the institutional world.

However, institutional delivery must be changed to eco-systems delivery.

The extensive discussions on adult learning and capacity building generated by the BDBO experience lead us to the following reflections:

NEW ECO-SYSTEMS OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

There are two major reasons for the need to shift the structures in which adult capacity building can take place:
1.
The institutional world is not able to respond quickly and adequately to the increasing capacity building needs
2.
The institutional world cannot offer such contexts of learning required to build change management capacity, as such capacity building will need to take place in medias res. integrated in the changing social and economic contexts and through the engagement in real-life and real-time challenges

Institutional delivery becomes impossible and inadequate and the scene must be shifted to dynamic eco-systems of capacity building, supported by cross-sector resources and driven by the adults themselves.

This puts a new and very important challenge on the table: *the capacity building of dedicated adults to co-drive capacity building for other adults, such as for example unemployed adults.*

UNEMPLOYMENT AND MANAGING LIFE CHANGE

Unemployment in the globalised world cannot sufficiently be addressed through re-skilling or through empowerment to write better job applications.
Unemployment must be addressed at a more global, holistic and long-term level: unemployed will need to manage a wide range of changes on their way to create something useful for themselves, including taking care of their families and paying the rent.

In this scenario labour market change becomes life change:

- You might need to revise or change your entire work and life expectations
- You might need to engage in a total re-orientation of what you can and will do and be able to do
- You might need to shift location, locally, nationally and even at European level
- You might need to build brand new capacity to turn the change into something useful
- You might need to be economically and socially active in a wide range of ways in the near and far future, such as unemployment, volunteering, learning periods, private business periods, project participation periods, etc.
- You might even need to be engaged in social and economic activities you never through of, such as research and innovation projects, citizens-driven social innovation and similar

The unemployed or the less educated adult should not pursue such resource creation and re-engagement individually and alone.
In most cases such individualised action is deemed to fail and deepen possible depressed situations.

So, the question arises: HOW to build capacity to manage such dynamic change?

FROM ADULT EDUCATION, RE-SKILLING AND PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

As stated above, the institutional world is not able to provide the contexts, resources and authenticity of such capacity building.
They might offer traditional adult education, re-skilling or upskilling and even personal empowerment, but they are not able to provide capacity building for dynamic change.

The scene must be shifted along the changed paradigm. Important characteristics of the new scenes are:

→ the capacity building must be integrated in real-life and real-time activities in the local or regional community, not happen in isolation
→ the capacity building must be able to tap into existing or emerging eco-systems of collaboration, based on practical missions and offering a range of participation forms
→ the capacity building needs to be supported by cross-sector partnerships offering engagement, expertise and dedicated guidance
→ such eco-systems must offer new engagements continuously, and be able to absorb adults and other citizens willing to participate in various real-life and real-time actions
→ the eco-systems must be able to at the same time offer learning, capacity building and various forms of economic and social perspectives for less educated adults
→ last, the eco-systems must be dynamic and flexible – like a living organism adapting to rapidly changing needs and opportunities

Interestingly, the Commission advocates the engagement of citizens in the full life circles of research and innovation activities, which is totally in line with our eco-system concept.

An important dimension in the paradigm shift is the shift from "learning activities to be able to take action" to "taking action and learning when needed and useful" – situated learning.

Obviously, an institutional approach offering enrolment in courses twice a year is useless in this context.
Rigid institutional structures need to change into dynamic eco-system structures, able to react quickly to emerging needs and opportunities.

Capacity building to manage change happens through taking part in change and learning what you need to learn along the missions and activities you engage in.

Europe witnesses the emergence of a wide range of "eco-systems" in our times; eco-systems of entrepreneuring, eco-systems of research and eco-systems of various forms of social innovation.

Leaving aside that some of these structures might not in fact be real eco-systems, and exploiting the fashionable eco-system discourse, we are really witnessing the emergence of such resources across Europe.

Nevertheless, few eco-systems of change management and capacity building for taking action for unemployed or less educated adults have yet seen the light, most likely due to the heavy institutional mentality governing this sector; but also because most stakeholders find it difficult to link unemployed and less educated adults to innovation, research, social innovation or entrepreneurship.

Providing funding for the experimentation with eco-systems for adults' capacity building and change management should therefore be put on the European policy agenda, based on a fundamental "re-thinking adult education".
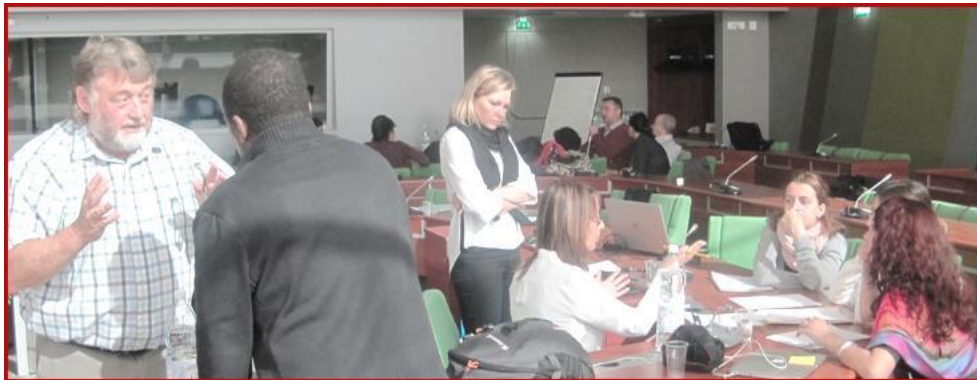
FROM TEACHERS TO MENTORS AND ROLE-MODELS

The change of scene from institutional provision (vertical paradigm) to eco-system resources (horizontal paradigm) produces a chain reaction among the elements involved in capacity building.
As the very paradigm shifts, nothing remains the same.

One of the major shifts concerns the *professionals* engaged in capacity building for managing change.
The institutional paradigm is exclusively built on teachers and similar professionals, also if such professionals are named otherwise.
The cornerstone in institutional provision is "the competent teacher".

In the eco-systems there are no teachers, and therefore no teaching.
A lot of learning takes place, but a different form of learning, deeply embedded in the concrete mission undertaken.
In the eco-systems it is not possible to pre-define the precise nature of such learning or support resources, as the role of mentor, guide or supported will change according to the resources needed to work in the missions.

This does not at all mean that less educated unemployed adults should be left on their own. On the contrary, this must never happen.
But it means that a wide range of professionals and citizens will be taking on the role of a mentor, guide or supporter – according to the configuration of the missions and the emerging micro-eco-systems, such as for example professionals from the participating partnerships, seniors, volunteers, community workers, scientists – and dedicated unemployed adults as role-models.

It is indeed obvious that within the new scene and the new paradigm, the best support resources are dedicated and experienced adults having worked their way through the capacity building themselves.
This is the most radical element in the horizontal paradigm. It rarely happens that local infrastructures are able to maintain the involvement of dedicated

unemployed or other citizens and offer them interesting and useful perspectives based on their experience and dedication.

The idea of such role-models and peer mentors and guidance is very strong and should be a key resource in local or regional capacity building for change management.
Engaging experienced adults in such roles might even offer them interesting economic perspectives. In this way role-modeling can be regarded a change management action in itself.

Obviously, such role-modeling should be properly documented and acknowledged by society.
A new dimension is therefore added to the validation of non-formal adult learning.

FROM ACADEMIA TO ENTREPRENEURIAL RESOURCES

Thus the nature of the learning resources to invest in the capacity building to manage change actions is very different from traditional adult education provision: from teacher, classroom and ready-made materials to entrepreneurial real-life resources provided ad hoc by the collaboration players.

Obviously, the shift is more complicated than the institutional paradigm; but this is because the world has become more complicated and because the less educated adults need to address more complicated life situations.

The need for complex change management will not disappear by imprisoning the capacity building in institutional frameworks. The complexity must be addressed, not avoided.

Through the capacity building the unemployed will therefore meet and work together with a wide range of "real-life" resources far away from the institutional classrooms.
As it is well-known that less educated adults were never comfortable in the classrooms and in the company of academia, and therefore the new paradigm will in fact offer them far more relevant learning and capacity building accompanying than the classrooms.

WHO CAN CONDUCT CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT?

In the educational power systems, only the teacher is knowledgeable. The system's blueprint guarantees this.

But who can mentor, guide and support capacity building for change management in local eco-systems?

Anyone deeply engaged in a mission!

There are *two key criteria* for resources qualified to work as mentors, guides and supporters in such eco-systems; they might work well alone or in various combinations:

1
EXPERIENCE
→ seniors
→ dedicated unemployed
→ dedicated community workers
→ entrepreneurs
→ innovators

2.
IMMERSION
→ professionals deeply involved in the mission
→ experts deeply involved in the mission
→ stakeholders with a strong interest in the mission

Of course, the capacity building process might, when needed and useful, involve various forms of dedicated learning activities, and in such cases teachers might be engaged ad hoc and punctually.
This engagement is, however, very different from the overall process mentoring, guiding and supporting provided to the unemployed along the entire mission circle.

LOCAL ECO-SYSTEMS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

What characterises, then, the paradigmatic shift to eco-system based capacity building?

The local or regional eco-systems must offer unemployed and other citizens a range of real-life and real-time engagements. Such engagements can take on many different forms and be of very different duration, but they will all be characterised as activities, projects or entreprenruial initiatives.

To celebrate the language of the new paradigm, we prefer to call all these activity forms "missions.
Missions are characterised by long-term engagement, creating something new, the need to accomplish the mission and the need to work through many and complex steps to accomplish the mission – and also characterised by the fundamental principles of teamwork, creating alliances and working in cross-sector partnerships or joint ventures.

The unemployed will build capacity to manage change through working in such real-life and real-time missions.
They will basically learn to turn change as a threat into change as an opportunity.

As such processes are long-term engagements, the capacity building is precisely sustainable, solid and robust.

The missions are obviously topic-free, so to speak, as the missions can address any relevant challenges or problem, locally as well as globally (virtually).

The point is the capacity built, not the topic addressed.

What characterises, then, such eco-systems of capacity building?

Most of all:

→   they can address any fundamental challenge or problem or idea in the community, calling for solid engagement and dedication
→   they are entrepreneurial in nature: they are missioned to create something new and useful
→   they are often linked to various forms of innovation, addressing social, economic, environmental or similar challenges
→   they include the collaboration of different stakeholders and resources to be missioned and accomplished
→   they often create new economic dynamics along the way and as a result
→   they often lead to new initiatives as spin-offs from the original mission
→   they can typically not be easily accomplished, such mission; they need alliances, stepwise approaches and a lot of teaming up of resources

A very important meta-mission of such missions is, however, precisely to contribute to the community's eco-systems of capacity building: each new mission creates new alliances, resources and dynamics, and these new assets will be available for the next team of unemployed engaged in capacity building!

In short, each mission creates new resources for other unemployed and citizens.

BEYOND "A NEW JOB" – TOWARDS MIXED LIFE STRATEGIES

The industrial and post-industrial adult education paradigm aimed to help the unemployed getting a new job.

This is not the objective of the capacity building for change management.

The capacity building might indeed results in a new job, but the mission of the capacity building goes further.

The aim of the capacity building is to create capacity to:

- meet complex challenges in constantly changing economic and social life
- be able to work with and in mixed work and life strategies, in which various forms of engagements and economy creation will take place
- change one's mentality from an institutional mentality (offer me what I need) to an open entrepreneurial mentality (I need to engage to create something for myself)
- help shifting from change as a threat to change as new opportunities
- take pleasure in deep engagement, creating new things and working with a variety of people
- manage change situations through working the community, its needs and interests
- take pride in missions accomplished

THE NEW CITY BRANDS…

But aren't local eco-systems of capacity building already taking place?

The new city brands - such as learning cities, smart cities, liveable cities, healthy cities, etc., etc. – are they not precisely about this, albeit in different forms?

Yes - and no.

In principle such cities should indeed offer various forms of eco-systems of engagement among the citizens, and in particular among those citizens mostly in need of new capacity, and they often do, at least at programmatic level.

The problem is that most of these city brands are top-down and policy-driven, sometimes to promote the city to an international audience or to boost economies.

This means that often less attention is paid to authentic eco-systems among citizens and community players, and even lesser attention to create the needed space for citizens and organisations to create such eco-systems.

City branding is therefore no guarantee for support to citizen-driven and mission-driven eco-systems of engagement and capacity building.

On the other hand, it should – at least in theory – be easier to promote such eco-systems in cities branding themselves as various forms of innovative cities, and in fact such cities should be the role-models for sustainable capacity building for unemployed and less educated adults.

TOWARDS A NEW LANGUAGE FOR THE PARADIGMATIC SHIFT IN ADULT ~~EDUCATION~~

Let us finally try to list a number of words that occurs along the paradigmatic shift – simply to foster and encourage further debates on this shift and support the creation of an adequate language for the new dynamic paradigm.

Industrial/post-industrial paradigm (vertical)	Globalised paradigm (horizontal)
Delivery of services	Engagement in real-life eco-systems
Based on educational principles	Based on entrepreneurial principles
Individual support oriented	Engaged in community oriented action
Skills and competence based	Capacity based
Oriented towards defined employment or activity goals	Oriented towards general capacity building and change management
Delivered by educations, labour market services or NGO's	Driven by cross-sector and dynamic eco-systems
Public or NGO domain	Cross-sector and mixed partnerships domain
From object of change to object of services and delivery	From object of change and delivery to subject of community based action
Linear approach	Circular and spiral based approach
First learning, then activity	Learning on demand along activity
Guiding and directing	Capacity to detect and take initiative
Object of innovation	Co-creator of innovation
Oriented towards individual resources	Oriented towards community opportunities
Upskilling and empowerment	Capacity building
Change as threat	Change as opportunity
Availability of education, training and labour market services	Availability of open dynamic and accessible eco-systems of entrepreneuring and initiative-taking
Key players are institutions, teachers, trainers and coaches (linear approach: from-to)	Key players are experienced unemployed, seniors, role-models and volunteer entrepreneurs and professionals (circular approach: collective, entrepreneurial capacity building)

NEW FUNDING PARADIGMS?

The European funding programmes do not always follow Commission policy! There is an (increasing?) implementation gap between Commission strategy, innovation and recommendations and funding opportunities in the European programmes.

It seems that the design of the funding programmes is haunted by certain inertia, based on mentalities closely linked to academia.

Adult education was almost deleted in the negotiations of Erasmus+, and only a last-minute rescue action from the European Parliament "saved" the adult education section of Erasmus+.

Interestingly, the idea of the programme designers was to merge adult education into Vocational Training! This is extremely symptomatic for what can be called a regressive adult education policy.

Still, adult education is extremely poorly funded across all the Commission's hundreds of funding programmes.
Putting giant but top-down and policy-driven programmes such as ESF and Equal, and including many InterReg as well, aside as mostly inaccessible for non-governmental players, we end up with very few programmes inviting innovation in adult education.

This happens in a time where Europe is changing like never before and where half of the European population is left behind without capacity to manage the constantly changing economic and social conditions.

Basically we are left with Horizon and Erasmus+ if we wish to get support for adult education innovation.
Horizon only very indirectly invites innovation in adult education, whereas it from time to time invites for example open schooling initiatives for young people to engage in science.

Several Horizon Calls addresses new forms of collaboration and eco-system creation in science, research and innovation contexts, but never in connection with capacity building of the millions of less educated adults – or in connection with the increasing number of less educated young people.

Creating eco-systems of capacity building of less educated adults to manage change and develop entrepreneurial mentally and capacity could easily be an ongoing topic as Coordination and Support Actions within the framework of Societal Challenges.
Such Calls could readily link up with such Commission policy as citizens involved in science, research and innovation.

So, we are in practice left with Erasmus+ - and in particular the Adult Education sub-programme.

First of all, this sub-programme is the most poorly funded in Erasmus+, indicating its surprisingly low political priority.

Second, the sub-programme priorities are still embedded in the industrial and post-industrial paradigms of adult education.

Upskilling, courses, the development of generic competences in the form of educational provision, etc, are the dominating topics.

European funding of eco-systems for capacity building of less educated adults is therefore challenged by at least three serious obstacles:

1.
Erasmus+ is in general still haunted by a lack of re-thinking of what education is and should be in 21st century Europe

2.
Erasmus+ is still extremely sector based and therefore not useful for cross-sector oriented and real-life oriented capacity building experimentation

3.
Conservative adult education mentality is still dominating the adult education sections, not allowing for the needed innovation and paradigm shift described in this paper

Furthermore, many National Agencies are interpreting adult education in their own national ways, often with conservative biases, and considering adult education projects low level projects only worthy of limited funding.

One of the conclusions of _Break Down or Break Out_ is therefore to recommend a fundamental revision and innovation of Erasmus+ and its possible followers, to allow for serious experimentation to shift outdated adult education paradigms and mentality to 21st century capacity building.

At the same time, the project wishes to recommend considering to establish a new type of funding programme, directly addressing the creation of dynamic eco-systems in local communities to accomplish multiple societal missions.

Project partners are openly available for further consultation on these matters.

MORE BREAKIN' OUT RESOURCES

Some of the topics addressed above are detailed and further elaborated in other BDBO products, such as:

The Breaking Out Capacity Building Guide

This is how we are breaking out - The Video

Why they need capacity building

BDBO Breakin' On Guidance Service

Break Out Capacity Building Model

The Break Out capacity building explained

The metamorphosis of adult education

These resources can be found in the project's <u>web platform</u>:

WEB RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

Directing Life Change
http://www.directlifechange.eu/

Gamification for long-term unemployed
http://playingforreal.eu/

The Break Down or Break Out project has ended – but we will be back to take the mission further…

BREAKOUT

Part 2
A new language

A serious and highly needed paradigm shift in adult education needs to be supported by a new language – or, as academia would say; a new discourse.

This paper and the *Break Down or Break Out* project at large is a contribution to such an emerging language.

An interesting parallel is the Commission's EntreComp: a framework missioned to precisely create a new language for the new ways of understanding entrepreneurial competences – a language for the paradigm shift from entrepreneurship as business creation to a much broader conception of entrepreneurial competence as a generic competences for initiative-taking in all educational, learning and social innovation contexts.

The mission of the EntreComp is in fact to create a "language of its own" for this new understanding – precisely the same way we need a new "language of its own" for the paradigm shift in adult education.

A fully implemented paradigm shift can only happen when embedded in a new form of communication.

But more: the parallelism between the entrepreneurial and adult education paradigm shifts is not accidental. The two paradigm shifts form part of a Europe fining its ways in the globalised economy.

The contribution from the *Break Down or Break Out* project to such a new language is based on two overarching and almost axiomatic concepts:

The concept of MISSION
The concept of CAPACITY BUILDING

In this Part 2 we offer a contribution to the emerging language af the adult education paradigm shift through descriptions of the dynamics and meaning of these two overarching concepts.

AN EMERGING LANGUAGE FOR THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN ADULT EDUCATION

WHY "MISSION"?

Why do we use the word MISSION in connection with capacity building of unemployed adults?

Why not use words like "activity", "project" or "task"?
Because we need a new language for the capacity building of unemployed adults, different from the traditional approaches…

The word MISSION is also borrowed from computer gaming. Good computer games take the player through different levels of challenges and tasks that must be accomplished to complete the… mission.
Often new levels are more complicated to accomplish than the first ones, and often you will need the resources created along the first levels to accomplish the tasks at later levels.

This means that you accumulate resources and skills along the different levels; precisely the skills and resources you will need to accomplish your mission.
Therefore you cannot simply jump to the last level, because you will not have the skills and resources to be successful at that level.
And therefore you cannot change the order or sequence of the levels, as each level will create the needed capacity to accomplish tasks at the next level.

Most people are very familiar with this "logic"; it's in their blood. Therefore we believe that this "computer game language" is useful when working with unemployed adults.

Another reference to the word MISSION is, of course, the religious mission: you go somewhere for a long time to preach a certain mentality, to help out people or to bring about some form of change in that location.
The valuable element in this reference is: intention.
You have a clear idea about what you wish to accomplish, a clear objective, and this objective is closely linked to *change*.
You are also aware that you will need some time to accomplish your mission, and that you might need to struggle and learn new things.

Yet another reference might link to scientific missions or to military missions, making you think about exploration of new areas hitherto unknown, or developing strategies and tactics to defeat your enemy.

However, the main reason for using the work MISSION is that it links strongly to the world of computer gaming.

Furthermore, and this is also true for good computer games, you can never accomplish your mission alone: you need team work; you need to work with various forms of resources and alliances along the levels.

WHAT'S THE KEY MISSION OF THE MISSION?

The most important thing in the kind of mission that we work with is to create *capacity*.
Our missions are real missions, linked to real-life engagement and real-life change. Unemployed adults need to build capacity to accomplish such real change missions. The missions must help them build capacity to better manage their dead-end situations, and to create something useful for themselves.

This means that the mission of the mission is always double:
- to create real change and new opportunities (social, economic, educational)
- to build real change capacity through the mission that can be used in any other context later on and independent of the actual and concrete aim of a mission

Why do unemployed and less educated adults need this?

Because for very many unemployed adults there are no other ways out than the ones they create themselves; for most of them education and good jobs are not realistic options… They need to be able to change the situation themselves, building on own resources and capacity. Society will not do it for them…

So, the key mission of the mission is to build capacity. *To do what?*

→ to help create an experience about being able to take action to change one's situation instead of being stuck in anger and frustration
→ to help develop a way to see the surrounding reality as something that can be impacted and changed
→ to develop the skills and competences to identify opportunities in the communities, whether social or virtual
→ to help create skills to create strong missions and to know how to take steps to accomplish them, including building up the needed resources, capacity and alliances along the steps
→ to help create a strong mentality: if game over in one mission, get back into game by creating another

In short, the mission of the mission(s) is to create a feeling based on real experience that you are indeed able to do something for yourself and bring about change.

The truth is, in fact, that more and more less educated adults, not only unemployed, will need such capacity in the constantly changing and unpredictable globalised economy.

The missions are the tools with which we seek to build these capacities, since such capacity cannot be built in the classroom or through traditional empowerment approaches.

Of course, this is a shock to the traditional educational world and to the establishment of teachers, institutions and social workers. They are not at all prepared for this kind of capacity building and they will need to learn alongside the unemployed adults.

WHAT CHARACTERISES A MISSION?

The key principles of such capacity building are embedded in the definition of a mission.
Many types of missions are possible and very many directions might be taken, as no manual is possible or even useful. Part of the capacity building is precisely about the ability to find your own way.

Nevertheless, and no matter how open the missions might be and how many different ways there might be to accomplish the missions, all missions should bring into play a number of key characteristics.

If these principles are not respected, the capacity building will either not occur, or be too weak to be useful and sustainable.

Let's mention the most important principles in creating missions for capacity building:

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
The missions to engage in should be missions impossible!
At least impossible for the normal way we see things, and what can be imagined among unemployed adults. The point is precisely that engaging in something you are already capable of will not produce new strong capacity, as you will simply repeat what you already can do.
To be attractive and productive, the mission must be difficult, complicated and challenging – but of course within reach of strong efforts..!

DEDICATION
The mission must call for strong dedication – from the team, but also from the professionals involved. The mission should be so interesting and attractive that dedication is constantly maintained along the work processes.
Dedication is needed to build capacity, not only to reach the goals defined.

IMMERSION
Strong dedication leads to immersion: immersion is a state of mind in which you are totally buried in carrying out the tasks and activities you need to work your way towards accomplishing your mission.

This characteristic explains why not all missions are good missions: if they do not create immersion, they are not strong enough, and little capacity building will result.

THINK BIG, BUT

This is also why you need to think big!

If we engage unemployed adults in small, trivial and unimportant challenges, we will simply add to their feeling of being underdogs and less important citizens. The missions must be "big enough" to create respect among them and to challenge their feeling of being inferior with less opportunities and resources.

Another reason for thinking big is that the mission must have a certain complexity, volume and duration to create immersion and thereby… capacity. Small and punctual activities will not do the job. They will have very little impact on the capacity of the unemployed.

Obviously, and it goes without saying, the missions should not be too big: building a spaceship flying to the moon is not a good mission.

The key point is: "big enough" to create immersion and capacity.

It has given me a sense of what trying to be an entrepreneur means,

CHALLENGE THE UNEMPLOYED

In other words, the mission must challenge the adults involved.

They must be challenged with missions that they could not imagine being involved in. The mission itself must be able to create respect and dedication among them.

The missions must be able to overcome their well-justified resistance to "well-meaning" activities from the institutional world. They must create a feeling of brand new ways of working and being engaged in challenges that few other unemployed people will be offered. The underdog becomes the alpha dog…

REAL-TIME AND REAL-LIFE

The missions can go in very many directions. The "juice" of the missions is not what they wish to accomplish in the end (the results), but what kind of capacity and new experience they create on the way.

However, the missions need to engage in things that take place here and now in the communities (physical or virtual), or in emerging initiatives bringing about new things. They must be real-time oriented and link to what is happening here and now. They must also be real-life oriented: missions built on simulations, artificial challenges or purely theoretical activities are not relevant in this context, as they do not create the needed respect, engagement and… capacity.

LONG TIME

Such a mission could be short or long, right? Wrong.

Serious challenges, missions that call for respect, dedication and immersion – and in particular capacity building – need a certain amount of *time*. Time matters. Changing mentality, experience and building new competences in real-life does not happen in a few days or weeks.

It is not possible, of course, to indicate such a thing as the perfect duration of a mission, as missions, resources and engagement levels can be very different.

However, strong missions will typically need to be carried out in months, not days or weeks, such as for example 4, 6 or 8 months, and in some cases more if possible.

COMPLICATED

The mission must be complicated, just like good computer games.
Not complicated in the academic sense, but complicated because many activities are needed, collaboration with many people is needed and because only a clever step-by-step strategy will allow moving from one level (activity) to the next.
Whereas most unemployed adults will step back in front of academic complications, they do not have to fear this kind of complications.

BALANCING WISHES AND REALITY

It is a basic and absolutely necessary principle that a mission is based on the interest, skills, talents, dreams or aspirations of the unemployed. If not, the mission will fail big time. No engagement, no long-term dedication and no capacity building.
However, it is precisely a key role of the mission facilitators and the local eco-systems to prevent any naïve or totally useless mission from taking place.
The ideas of the unemployed must be balanced and assessed against what makes sense, what is useful, what other people might appreciate and what can offer them sustainable social and/or economic change.
The mission facilitators must be brave and direct and willing to counter and prevent such naïve or useless initiatives. This is in fact taking the unemployed seriously, and at the end it will create respect for the missions among the unemployed.

Erasmus+ project Break down break out - Chamber Commerce Sabadell & Fundació Barberà Promoció

ENTREPRENEURIAL INSPIRATION

Our key words – *capacity building* and *missions* – are of course closely linked to the re-interpretation of what entrepreneurship means.
Unlike in the old days where entrepreneurship was about creating a small business, today entrepreneurship has received a much broader interpretation: entrepreneurial mentality and behaviour has now been made independent of the end result (a small business) and is defined by the entrepreneurial process: taking action, trying out, experimenting, linking to real-life challenges, creating something new – and creating capacity to work through all the phases of entrepreneurial action.
The end result can still be a small business, but also a service, an organisation, a club, a community initiative and much more…
The juice is the process, not the result, and the same is true for our key word *capacity building*.
It is of extreme importance that capacity built up in one form of mission can be transferred to any other mission.

STEP BY STEP

The key method in our missions is precisely inspired by good and immersive computer games: the mission is complicated and we cannot simply make a big jump and accomplish this mission. Not possible. What, then?

We need to proceed as the good computer games: step by step, level by level.
We need to build up the capacity to accomplish the mission.
The art of missioning is precisely to take the right steps in the right order and slowly build up the needed resources, alliances and power to accomplish the mission.
This often includes very many steps, along which we must learn, explore, build alliances, create plans, demonstrate our project, create economy, negotiate and struggle our way towards making the mission impossible possible.
Each successful step represents new resources and new alliances and new opportunities, allowing us to take the next step.
To some extent the needed steps can be planned, but in many cases the stepwise progression will need to be adjusted to what really happens along the first steps.

LEARNING ON THE FLIGHT

Such capacity building is not about education or training. You cannot learn these things in the classroom.
That does not mean that no learning will take place. A lot of learning will take place in most missions, but this learning is another kind of learning than in the classroom:
- it will take place when it is needed to solve problems at the different levels (situated learning)
- it will take place when the learning makes sense and is important (learning when needed and on demand)
- it will take place closely linked to real-life activities and challenges (relevance)
- it will take place when frustration arises along the mission process (motivation)
- it will be practically useful to the unemployed (theory and practice closely linked together)
So, the missions turn educational didactics upside down:
$\rightarrow$ in traditional education you learn in theory for 20 years and then start approaching practice and real-life
$\rightarrow$ in mission based learning you work in real-life and insert learning elements as needed

INVOLVES MANY 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Working and struggling through such challenging missions will create very many and very important 21st century skills and competences. In the classrooms of institutional adult education most unemployed adults will not even come near such competence development…
Along the mission steps you need to analyse reality, seize opportunities, negotiate with community players, collaborate with alliance partners, present your mission with creative media, draw up financial plans and budgets, etc., etc.
Evidently those are key competences in the 21st century, highly appreciated by many companies and often more valued than long theoretical academic educations.
The point is: if we present such learning challenges to the unemployed in the abstract forum of the classroom, they will step back and drop-out.
When these learning challenges emerge from the progression towards accomplishing their own mission, the motivation to learn will be 10 times bigger.

It's that simple.

Importantly, our mission-based capacity building approaches, and the innovation in adult education we promote, is fully in line with the Commission's EntreComp – the European Entrepreneurial Competence Framework, one of the most important Commission initiatives to guide future education innovation, and based on two years intensive research and stakeholder consultancy.

WHAT IS NOT A MISSION, THEN?

Let us close this description of what a mission is and should be by indicating what cannot be considered missions (as such activities do not create capacity):

- any punctual or short-term activity is not a mission
- activities running for some time but still simple activities without further perspectives are not missions
- engagement in already existing initiatives is not a mission
- involvement in various forms of labour market insertion activities in organisations or in the community is not a mission
- activities that do not create something new and useful for the unemployed and for other people are not missions
- simple activities easy to accomplish are not missions

In short: activities that do not create the capacity described are not missions.

A mission is therefore defined by the capacity it creates among the unemployed adults and the perspectives it offer.

Does this mean that such non-mission activities are "bad" or "useless"?

Not at all; it simply means that such activities are not missions in our context, as they do not create the capacity to manage change needed among the unemployed.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF A MISSION?

What should, then, come out of working in such missions?

As mentioned, missions can go in all sorts of directions, as long as they create capacity and real change. The quality of a mission is not defined by the result of the mission – the content or topic, so to speak – but by its ability to create powerful capacity.

So, no matter the concrete aim and result of a mission, it should create the following outcomes:

- new capacity, skills and competences among the unemployed to manage change, to break out of dead-end situations and to create something for themselves
- the capacity must be transferable to other missions and contexts
- the capacity built must be sustainable and long-term useful to the unemployed
- a new mentality among the unemployed adults, allowing and encouraging them to engage in similar missions in the future, if and when needed, and preferably allowing them to serve as role-models for other unemployed or less educated adults
- the mission should bring about a significant change in the social and economic situation of the individual unemployed, or as a minimum the resources to create such change

- the mission should create something new in real-life, such as in the local community or in virtual communities
- the mission should, to be successful, create something useful or attractive for other people; something that other people would like to use, participate in, buy or in other ways appreciate
- the mission should aim to create sustainable outcomes: what is accomplished by the mission should be continued, transferred or even expanded

As can be seen, these "outcomes criteria" are not at all linked to the content of the missions; they simple point to what makes a mission a mission.

We're on the way, but there is still much to do...

THE BREAKING OUT CAPACITY BUILDING PRINCIPLES

The clear aim of the capacity building is to equip long-term unemployed with tools to work the community to break out of dead-end situations and create new economic and social opportunities for themselves and their families.

This is not easy and therefore the capacity building approach is based on a set of principles and work methods precisely leading to such capacity.
The principles are transversal and topic-free as they need to be applied to a wide range of situations, and as the unemployed might need to go through new "working the community" activities several times.

The 10 most important Breaking Out capacity building principles are:

1

It is based on CHANGE MISSIONS in the community. Such change missions are substantial, they will have a significant duration such as from a few to many months and they must offer the unemployed deep and immersive experience.

2

The missions must always be linked to the PERSONAL INTERESTS, aspirations, talents or ideas of the unemployed, and at the same time address needs and OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY.
The missions must bring together and combine those personal and community dimensions.

3

The capacity building missions must be REAL-LIFE and REAL-TIME missions: they must address real-life problems or opportunities in the community and in real-time.
Capacity building cannot be created through classroom exercises and simulations.

4

The missions must be organised in STEPS AND LEVELS, as most missions cannot simply be accomplished in one single movement.
Each step will build capacity to address the challenges at the next level.
This step by step methodology is crucial: you need to work through a number of steps to be able to turn your idea or opportunity into reality: you do not have the resources, power or "capacity" to complete your mission directly; you need to build up the resources, the power and the "capacity".'

5

Unemployed should never engage in missions alone. Such long-term engagement needs collective support, COLLABORATION and action.

The missions must be addressed in TEAMS: a limited number of unemployed (2-3) joins forces with an adult educator, a facilitator, a capacity building guide, a job consultant or similar – and if possible also with a resource with interest in the mission and willing to support it.

6

All missions are entrepreneurial in the sense that they aim to CREATE SOMETHING NEW or change something that does not work. The point is not "what" is created, but that what is created offers the unemployed new social and economic opportunities to break out of the dead-ends, and at the same time is useful to the community (= will be appreciated and used by people in the community).

7

Evidently there will be new things to learn for the unemployed (and for the team) along such missions.
But this learning is not abstract, isolated or driven by formal requirements. The CONTEXTUALISED LEARNING is inserted when needed to accomplish one the steps, one of the sub-missions. This ensures the motivation to learn among the unemployed.
Such learning might address a wide range of topics, such as economy, rules and regulations, language, media and technology, and similar.

8

The unemployed must be at the centre of all activities in the mission.
Professionals supporting the missions cannot replace unemployed struggling to build capacity.
The unemployed are the DRIVERS of their own missions, and this is why capacity is built.

9

Each step, each level and each challenge along the mission will need to create RESOURCES for the mission.
It is important that resources are not simply created within the circles of depressed economies or communities (one unemployed helping another), but manage to tap into the dynamics of the community economy, knowledge and social infrastructures.
The missions must work their way into resourceful organisations, professionals and power centers.

10

Along the missions a lot of things will happen: you get to know people, you create collaboration with organisations and you build alliances to take new steps in the mission.
And, you also often get engaged in unexpected dialogues and discussions, not directly linked to your mission.

All these "SPIN-OFFS" are really valuable: the team and the unemployed should be guided to take as much advantage of such opportunities as possible: maximising the possible outcomes of such spin-offs.

The Break Down or Break Out project has ended – but we will be back to take the mission further…