



QA 11



GAMIFICATION FOR HER ADULTS

Roma dynamics: GOING EPIC...!

The partner meeting in Roma in September was expected to be a very important milestone in the project, including bridging from the first year's trying out to more substantial experimentation in the second year.

The meeting fully met those expectations and more...

This QA comment, not replacing the meeting minutes, simply aims to point to and capture some of the most important elements from the meeting, and focusing in particular on some very interesting future opportunities *for gamification of social change*.

[PROJECT WEB](#) ⇒





Going epic...! - 1

The Roma meeting demonstrated a very strong dedication among the project's practice partners to face the considerable challenges in the project, including creating new ways for long-term unemployed adults beyond traditional empowerment approaches.

Facing very different situations and opportunities across Europe, it seems as each practice partner has found the way to work with the challenges and to create valuable material for the project.

The project never intended a one size fits all approach, and the practice partners have worked hard to find their ways - very much in line with the project's approach to unemployed in difficult situations: you need to find your way, as a pre-defined way out of your situation will not be given to you.

Material produced from the local activity already proved valuable to the project and there is little doubt that the local practice will produce substantial contributions to the projects' virtual platform as well as to the final outcomes.



Going epic...! - 2

The Roma milestone meeting confirmed what we have learned about experimentative European projects: most likely the first project year need to focus on getting in flow, establish mutual understanding, working with the community and trying out in all sorts of directions.

It might seem as the project is not progressing well along the first year, but this is a very superficial point of view.

In fact we can see that the many different investments along the first year really produce value for the project's second year.

Our project is therefore a brilliant example on accepting and appreciating the many capacity building activities carried about by practice partners along the first year. This capacity building will help them and the project to proceed on solid grounds, adding considerable quality to the project's results.

In short, quality takes time!



Going epic...! - 3

The Roma meeting was expected to be the bridge to *the project going epic*.

What does going epic mean?

In this context going epic means engaging and immersing into long full-scale missions with teams of unemployed.

Such missions are epic because they create full life change stories, because they unfold in progressive “chapters” or “levels” and because they pursue real change through including the players in journeys with obstacles, alliances and new opportunities.

But they are also epic due to their narrative nature: real-life stories are created, told and shared.

In comparison traditional training courses and information activities are not epic, as they do not engage the players in real-life, real-time and personal life change.

Evidently, going epic goes well with gamification, and the project might contribute to the understanding of the difference and continuity between punctual gamification and epic gamification, which should be addressed in the project’s knowledge papers.

Epic gamification might add new and interesting dimensions to what we might call serious gamification: gamification of longer life change processes and missions approaching what might be labeled “the life change mission IS the game”.

An example of the *epic nature* of one of the directions taken by a practice partner is the Bistrita community centre:

- challenged with depressive mentality
- struggling to find ways out
- overcoming obstacles but also suffering several set-backs
- building on a few creative citizens
- creating the needed first small alliances
- establishing a first community platform (milestone)
- creating new initiatives in the centre
- engaging interested citizens step by step
- ...and doing all this across considerable time periods and constantly in need of sustaining the progress made

At first glance, gamification is not in operation here. But it is: the community centre IS the game.

And a question is justified: how can gamification principles and mechanics support the progression of such community initiatives?

What does social gamification mean?

We might be looking at some interesting new gamification genres along the project...



Going epic...! - 4

The Roma meeting opened up to very interesting discussions about the nature of gamification:

- What does gamification mean in the context of difficult social situations?
- What is the relation between concrete gaming and games on one hand and more long-term epic gamification on the other?
- How can gamification contribute to real-life and real-time change processes?
- What is the relation between symbolic rewards and real-life social rewards?
- Are there different but interrelated meanings of gamification according to the nature of the activity it covers and organizes?
- We set out to ask: how can gamification contribute to innovative change processes in real-life; but we might also turn it around and ask: how can real-life change processes contribute to new forms of gamification, perhaps even to new genres of gamification?

All this might appear somehow theoretical, but it is far from that: all this will be unfolded in the Barcelona mobility event and tested in practice.

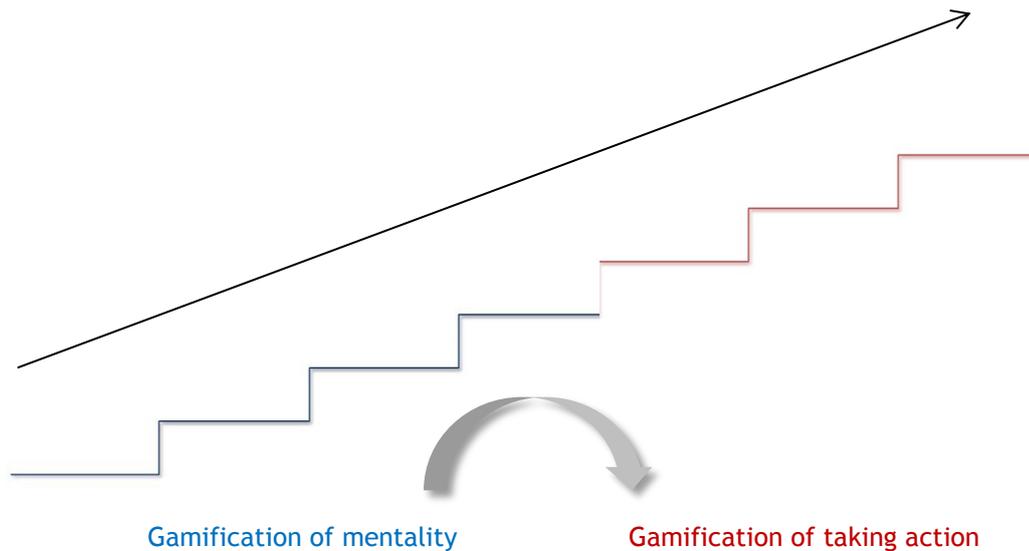


Going epic...! - 5

Along the Roma meeting the most important juice questions (and challenges) in the project were reformulated; not giving clear answers, but making the project more able to address them:

- How can gamification of mentality activities be taken further into the gamification of taking action in the community?
- What is the relation between gamification of mentality and gamification of action?
- What is the difference between symbolic and real-life rewarding?
- What is the difference between competences, skills and ...capacity?

Along the meeting this was illustrated through the *progression of capacity building*:



How can the gamification of mentality be continued into gamification of taking action?

That is one of the key challenges in the project.

Most practice partners still need to take the steps from in-team capacity building to capacity building through taking action (creating change missions) in real-life.

A considerable part of the project's final knowledge production and knowledge papers will precisely need to deal with these questions.

A special and not often addressed challenge emerged along the discussions: what about anger, aggression, frustration among unemployed in difficult social and economic situations?

The traditional education environment does not appreciate anger and aggression, unless unfolded in special "therapeutic" contexts.

This is one of the problems when academia addresses people in social crisis situations. Academia works with the head not with the body, so to speak.

Should anger and aggression not be appreciated in our context?

Perhaps anger and aggression should not be suppressed but turned into a resource?

How can gamification help turning destructive aggression into constructive aggression?

If academia and gamification wishes to engage with people in social crisis, they both need to get their hands dirty!



Going epic...! - 6

Somewhat unexpectedly the partnership, driven by creative minds, unfolded its dynamics in relation to what is called the Barcelona mobility: 50 project workers, trainers and unemployed meeting up for a week in Sabadell Barcelona to share experience and collaborate to create strong input for the project's second year practice.

At least that was the idea.

The Roma meeting changed this dramatically.

Through self-criticism the partners assessed the design of the Barcelona event as quite traditional, less motivating and not in line with the gamification missions of the project.

We should practice what we preach ☺

The partner discussions turned the Barcelona mobility into an event for bravehearts: not only basing the various activities on gameplay, but designing the entire week as progressive gameplay and as one large gamified process, governed by an overarching narrative: project story-tellers will ensure the narrative and dramatic progression along the five gamification days offering the participants an epic experience.

Thus the Roma meeting redesigned the Barcelona mobility from a basically experience sharing forum to the perhaps most dynamic and productive resource in the project.

The mobility event will not talk about gamification, but practice it; and this will produce considerable resources for the project, the website and the final outcomes, along with motivating some of the participants to join the project's futuring.

The gamified mobility presents considerable challenges to the partners and to the project's gamification resources: the different sessions and the gameplay in the sessions must be linked together into a narrative progression encompassing the entire week and clearly experienced by the participants.

No matter the final results of this event, the experimentation will produce a lot of new knowledge, experience and ...new challenges.

Most likely the Barcelona experimentation - why not call it the Barcelona X - will generate the need for further European project experimentation, taking serious gamification to new action fields (real-life change, social innovation, etc.), including perhaps reflecting on: *how can a European project be gamified and what would we obtain through such gamification?*

From a quality assurance point of view it is strongly appreciated that a partnership decides to engage in complicated experimentation instead of taking the easy way - taking the road less travelled with Robert Frost.

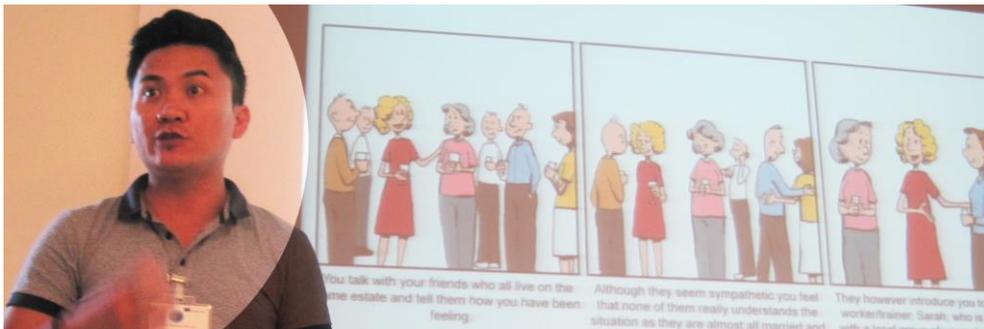


Going epic...! - 7

In conclusion of status from a QA perspective, the Roma meeting demonstrated:

- partners and local collaborators have invested considerable resources in finding their way to work with the project challenges
- practice partners seem to be able to carry out the project experimentation with considerable quality and based on increasing consensus
- the project will create and design a mobility event that goes far beyond what is foreseen in the application, and the dynamics resulting from this should be exploited to the max - in and beyond the project lifetime
- practice partners seem to be ready to create valuable raw material for the project web and final outcomes
- the project seems to be solidly working towards useful results and outcomes, including overcoming various obstacles inherent to the nature of the project experimentation
- the nature of the collaboration in the project points towards project results beyond what could be expected

From a QA point of view there are therefore no reasons to call for substantial changes in the directions taken by the project. However, to sustain the positive directions a number of recommendations should be presented and taken seriously by the partners.



Going epic...! - 8

Mid-project QA recommendations

Project

- › ensure substantial communication with practice partner activities along the second year
- › ensure that raw material from the project practice is transformed into useful scenarios for the project web and final outcomes
- › launch more newsletters and link them to web content

- › ensure that the project's gamification partners are supported financially to be able to carry out what can be considered project tasks beyond foreseen in the application
- › plan and ensure a strong evaluation and reflection activity in the middle of the second year
- › ensure that the Barcelona dynamics are exploited to the max, in-project as well as beyond-project and at strategic level

Practice partners

- › make efforts to continue the in-team mental gamification and empowerment into taking action in the community, in particular in the period from January to June 2016
- › review and discuss in the teams the basic principles and objectives of the project at certain milestones
- › take seriously the roles of trainers and unemployed as project journalists, including exploiting this role to build capacity among them
- › remember to identify, support and make visible especially interested unemployed and trainers, for in-project tasks but also for beyond-project initiatives
- › exploit the Barcelona mobility to the max, as to interest, motivation and capacity building
- › invite the project to support your initiatives if needed (do not take for granted that the project does not have the resources for this!)
- › and first of all: tell the stories ☺

Barcelona mobility

- › a very strong focus on the design of the event is needed
- › ensure the progression along the sessions and along the various forms of gameplay
- › ensure very strong documentation and story-telling from the event, including from the participants themselves
- › ensure a qualified follow-up of the event, including offering motivated participants interesting opportunities and mission after the event to sustain and take further their interest
- › exploit the event for dissemination and exploitation of the project



Yeah, we will leave you now; but make no mistake: the game has just begun!