PRESENCE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS:
Social Interaction and Shared Reality

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Abstract: Planners create a process in their interaction with the people affected by a plan. Information is emotionally and cognitively perceived and accepted in that process to arrive at decisions on future plans. A planning process occurs in a constructed reality. This reality must be shared among the participants of this planning process. Shared reality emerges out of *interaction* and *communication* in groups. To communicate it is necessary to get into *contact* and to come to a *mutual understanding*. Mutual understanding is possible if the participants have *corresponding* perceiving capacities and interpretation patterns used for coding and decoding. In my planning practice I have organized the mutual experience of *concrete situations* to create corresponding structures between participants. Groups of people affected by a plan are invited to show me their daily environment, the "object" of the plan. We start our contact by with walking together. I call this a *moved planning process*. This paper analyzes my practical experience in planning in small rural towns in the light of different theories about communication and understanding. I discovered that walking contributes to the decision process in groups. At the beginning walking strengthens the experience of *presence* in concrete situations. This then reduces discussions and common decisions are better accepted and supported by the group. A *moved planning process* leads to a *correspondence* between the participants and therefore to *consensus*. In geocollaboration (Mac Eachren, Brewer 2004) they point out four contexts which should be supported: - *knowledge construction*, to create meaning out of collaborative extraction of information; - support of common *design* in the group; - *group decisions* that use geospatial information; - *training and education* (to advance group learning). To connect my results with the complementary discussion about geocollaboration I will list conditions for collaboration to enable successful group work.

1.   INTRODUCTION

In a *moved planning arrangement* a process is created in which information is emotionally and cognitively perceived and accepted by the participants. We want to arrive at decisions about plans for the future.

Joint activities of a group help to concentrate the mutual experiences of the participants in the *concrete situation* in the *Here and Now*. To focus on this *concrete situation* I invite the people to walk together and experience the dynamics of social interaction and communication in groups.

For communication it is necessary to get into *contact* and to come to a *mutual understanding*. Understanding is based on mutual experience. Based on the *correspondence* participants of a group develop agreements, decisions, and a common acting.

Walking leads to a shared experience of reality and to common acting. Walking together produces mutual respect for differing points of view. My research question therefore was "Why does walking contribute to a decision process?"

The relevant information is found in a widely dispersed literature on
- joint experienced movement (Hannaford 1995, Pallaro 1999),
- communication   (Argyle   2002,   Buber   1995),   especially   on communication of emotions (Clynes 1996, Damasio 1999, Dreitzel 1992, Langer 1984),
- social interaction (Geertz 1983, Joas 1980),
- philosophy, cognition and neuroscience (Merleau-Ponty 1966, Johnson 1987, Rizzolatti 2001, Roth 2001, Varela, Thompson, Rosch 1997).

Literature on therapeutic work with groups (Lewin 1951, Rogers1985, Schmid 2004, Smith 2001) confirmed the insights.

Walking strengthens the experience of presence in concrete situations. Discussions are reduced and common decisions are better accepted and supported. A possible explanation would be the hypothesis: *"Mutual understanding is only possible in concrete situations"*. In a field experiment with a walking arrangement we observed changes in the acting and behavior of a group and how decisions were made (Bakeman, Gottman 1997). The results of the experiment show the effects of the concrete meeting in *Here and Now*.

If a group meets the bodies of the participants give information about state and attitude. Persons walking simultaneously perceive, decode, and make decisions on acting in the daily environment. Jointly walking increases an *intercorporal* existence of the group (Merleau-Ponty 1966). A *moved planning arrangement* leads to a *correspondence* between the participants because they experience the intercorporal existence of the group.

In my arrangement for a meeting the participants experience immediate behavior *Here and Now* which evokes primarily patterns of existence and less patterns of thinking. Different constructions remain as different concepts, but *experiences* and *understanding* (Johnson 1987) are *shared*.

The aim of the paper is to discuss basic structures of communication in groups in *concrete* situations. These structures help to recognize which criteria are necessary to organize virtual communication of groups and which decision support is possible with virtual communication.

The structure of the meetings, as I organize them, is shown in the next section. The third section deals with joint activities for a *mutual understanding*. The fourth section differentiates levels of *nonverbal communication*. These levels are important for the mutual understanding of behaving patterns and for the communication of emotions and motivations between participants. The fifth section presents different *contexts* for *understanding*. In the sixth section I look at *shared reality* of participants, to stress the special effects of collocated groups for perceiving and decision making in the seventh section. In the last section I transfer the insights to the virtual domain.

The discussion about the use of electronic communication broadened from the focus of individuals (how they perceive, transform information into knowledge) to the focus of groups (interaction characteristics, collaboration tasks). I found out that most attempts deal with cognitive approaches. I paid attention to the emotional part of decision making in groups, and listed possibilities how a group can integrate new experiences and knowledge to *common decisions* and *acting*.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE MOVED PLANNING PROCESS

To initiate a process of building trust in a group I organize walks to create a shared situation. All political and administrational responsible persons and affected people are invited to these walks. The aim is to break the usual structure of participation and decision making in the villages. Each meeting during the planning process is structured into a phase of walking and a following phase of sitting together to reflect. The arrangement enables a process of contact within the group.

Welcome: Each meeting starts with a welcome, where I explain the aim and the structure of this meeting. People are asked to show me their daily environment. Then we start and go through the village or area.

Arrival: Initially the participants (metaphorically) arrive in the situation. There participants experience movement and space. They get familiar with

the situation, find their style of interaction and take over roles as experts of their daily life.

Attending: During walking we find the important topics and speak about it. They participate in the process and integrate new experiences and information.

Common decisions: During walking we see what has to be done. At the end of the meeting we sit together and collect ideas, recognize necessaries and decide the next steps until the next meeting.

Sharing of responsibilities: At the end of the meeting everyone is assigned a task until the next meeting. The joint activity should have created the motivation to contribute.

In the *moved planning process* everyone gets the possibility of personal experiencing, communicating, and acting. Everybody finds a place for personal needs, wishes, aims, and tasks. I create a mood for mutual esteem to develop joint actions. Everyone is an expert of his or her personal life. Joint activities help to get into contact and to come to a mutual understanding.

3. JOINT ACTIVITIES

A *moved planning process* is designed to open up rigid social structures, as often encountered in social groups of villages. I walk with the participants through the daily environment to enable common experiences. During common experiences participants review their attitudes and images they brought along.

3.1 Jointly Experienced Movement

Body exercises, which require coordination of left and right body parts, strengthen the connection of the neurals between the right and left part of our brain. Even simple walking is such an "overcross" movement and activates these neurals. If we go regularly the exchange between both parts of our brain is quicker. We become more aware of perceiving, feeling, thinking, and acting (Hannaford 1996). This is the effect of walking on individuals.

Movement is orientated in action. Joint movement leads to actions together. The theory behind different body therapy forms deals with the connection of involuntary movement and acting (Dreitzel 1992), and leads to insights about movement together and common acting.

To each personal movement (behavior) belongs a shared movement (behavior) (Merleau-Ponty 1966). This effect is exploited in groups which work with body therapeutic methods as in authentic movement (Pallaro 1999). Participants move through the space with closed eyes. Each has a

partner who takes care that she does not hit obstacles. The moving person is free to move how she feels. The bodies start to communicate. After some time of mutual experiencing the bodies respond to the one another without consciously knowing it, a shared behavior is increasing.

Joint walking creates experiences together, namely the common rhythm of step, the regular breathing, the physical effort, and the feeling of fatigue. We perceive pictures with our senses and I move people to encourage their trust in their senses while moving the body. I encourage them to trust their own understanding of their needs.

3.2 Mutual Understanding

Imagination and understanding emerges from our embodied experiences. Human bodily movement, manipulation of objects and interaction, integrate recurring patterns and develop new ones.

We are never separate from our bodies. Our bodies have been ignored in discussions about communication and decision making because they seemed to have no role in reasoning and understanding.

"The body has been ignored because reason has been thought to be abstract and transcendent, that is, not tied to any of the bodily aspects of human understanding" (Johnson 1987)

We are able to integrate information and transform it into knowledge in a mutual understanding. This transformation is also a bodily transformation. The experiences are stored in our bodies (Merlau-Ponty 1966). Joint activities bring up joint experiences, we manipulate objects and interact in the group. Experiencing actions together leads to a mutual understanding.

4. NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION OF GROUPS

Each communication starts with getting into contact. The experience of contact is only possible in the *Here and Now*. During the meeting the group experiences *the same concrete situation* and all participants are aware of this. This base of contact helps to develop all further communication and understanding. It is estimated that about 50% of communication is nonverbal, 30% of communication is determined by usage and intonation of voice, and about 20% is communicated by words (Mehrabian 1972). Nonverbal communication is a central part for social interactions.

4.1   Presence

We experience mutually that we are here at the same time at the same place. This creates structures for further interactions. The presence of participants is recognized as an intentional act. They show interest in the group and in the themes they want to solve.

4.2   Personal Appearance

People in groups recognize character of others nonverbally. They perceive, in this order, skin, sex, attitudes, and clothes (Argyle 2002). These perceptions and performances of character are produced and constructed intentionally and unintentionally. During a meeting people recognize mutually those perceptions and performances and try a corresponding style of interaction. They improve this style of interaction and communication until they feel comfortable. Often nonverbal communication in groups is ambiguous and tentative.

In experimental situations it was tested how people express and understand emotions (Argyle, Alkema and Gilmour, 2002). The finding was that only a small number of emotions can be differentiated without knowing the context. The rich variety of emotions we experience and understand depends on the state of the sending and receiving of persons in the special context. Bodies tell more about emotions than faces, because faces are much easier to control.

4.3   Gestures

Gestures are acts of nonverbal communication and unintentional movements independent of speech acts. The first gestures children learn to understand are bodily contact, facial play, intonation, and smell. This basic contact helps to develop all further communication and understanding acts. Usually children are better at understanding state and emotions of others than adults. This ability diminishes at the time when the possibilities of verbal expressions develop (Argyle 2002).

A mutual perception of gesture is only possible if participants perceive state and motivation. Gestures tell about emotions and include unconsciously and consciously used signs (Langer 1984). Emotions bring bodily reactions; you are only able to understand if you know the specific context of the group.

For example, when participants walk together they exchange bodily and verbal information. Nonverbal signs are stronger than verbal signs to convey

emotions. Emotions can be immediate reactions like disgust, fright, or tiredness, and they can be social signs like fear or anger.

4.4 Nonverbal Elements of Speech

Speech has the highest range for intentional control and differentiation. It demands functional selection, social control, and temporal sequences.

Nonverbal communication changes the meaning of verbal expressions. A temporal coordination, the usage of intonations and of different expressions to comments is part of every speech. Movements of the hands, minimal physical movements, nodding with the head, eye contact, and mimic influence the success of a speech act. People move with the speaker, the style of speech adjusts to nonverbal feedbacks.

5. DIFFERENT CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING

Mutual understanding between people is possible, if the participants have corresponding perceiving capacities and interpretation patterns. For example when I come to a social group in a village we have to find a base for joint perceiving and interpretation patterns. Understanding of perceived acts becomes meaningful by the different context of social interactions.

5.1 Self-Referential Context for Understanding

The personal acting has a self referential meaning to give continuity and identity to the own being and acting. The "I" is a live system which has emotional, spiritual, and cognitive abilities. It is adapting permanently to the changing environment. For the internal structure of self it is crucial to have self awareness for these changes and anchor it to one´s own identity. We experience a personal history and we develop through our experiences. We acquire new competences through the contact with others.

From the base of this "I" we are able to get into contact with "you" and with the experiences of the "you" (Buber 1995). Within this self referential context we are able to understand behavior of the others as an expression of their "I".

At a meeting and during a walk this concrete context is strengthened. People find a common rhythm and breath, and have joint experiences. This immediate behavior evokes patterns of existence and less patterns of thinking. The different constructions of participants remain separated, but experiences and understanding are shared, and are accepted (Johnson 1987). These experiences lead to new shared concepts.

5.2   Inter-Referential Context for Understanding

This context is the backdrop for concrete understanding between participating persons. This relation becomes apparent in behavioral patterns, through acting, and physical movement. It opens the structures of social interaction and renews a new base of contact. The participants experience themselves mutually within every new meeting and the structure of interaction in the concrete situation is defined anew.

Participants develop new roles and test them in new behaving patterns. This is the condition that they are able to perceive new contents and information, and integrate it into their personal experience, knowledge, and acting. This flexible interaction enables to anticipate and imagine the future (Johnson 1987).

5.3   Supra-Referential Context of Understanding

This context deals with culturally defined constructions. Daily knowledge is socially anchored. Communication is based on the expectation that all participants share this knowledge about capacities, practices and stances towards objects (Johnson 1987). For example symbols, used like gestures or words, get their meaning from the context implied and understood.

The symbolic meaning of roles, things, and situations motivate actions give a shared orientation. The capacity of people to understand the acting of the other, is developed like an evolutionary adaptation. Individual development differentiates from common actions (Mead , Joas 1980). Older experiences are brought in as common sense (Geertz 1983).

During walking the meaning of symbols are related to the ever changing shared experiences. We exchange our individual understanding of symbols and behavior. I imagine how my partner is able to understand me and my partner imagines how I understand him.

„we …do not only express meanings, but we also include the attitudes of the others towards ourselves. While using symbols for communication we look at ourselves from the perspective of our partners, we take their role." (Burkart 1998, translated by C.R.)

If we stop walking, the location is present as a context for our talking. The environment we experience gives a shared context for experiencing and understanding our reality. Mutual expectations that we think about the same subject have an effect on communication.

6.   SHARED REALITY

Our civilization is based on the construction of meaning, which influences the ideas of people and their daily acts. These constructions document the personal and social process of perception, appropriation, identification, and integration.

6.1   Common Experience of Reality Here and Now

As a planner I induce people to show me their daily environment. Usually we meet in the evening to speak about the possibilities and problems. Everybody has had a different day with different experiences and starts from different emotions. To initiate a process I organize a walk to create a shared situation, where people can leave behind the day's events. They experience a correspondence in the finding of a common language. An accepted vocabulary emerges.

The previously constructed reality of individual participants often differs from the encountered reality during the walk. Differences can be pointed out and erroneous conceptions corrected. For example, I see plants which indicate the usage of nutrients and can inquire about fertilizer usage. The feedback from the visible evidence forces the participants to learn about the consequences of their actions. In our shared experience and speaking about it we explain our realities.

We progress from collecting data and abstract concepts to a common experienced reality. This ultimately touches upon the feeling of identity of the people affected. I am able to show them in which relationship their ideas stand to attitudes of society at large and norms, which are manifest in the use of space and in the use of land.

6.2   Bodies are Communicating Here and Now

Our experiences are corporal and sensorial. They build our neural networks and enable our feeling and thinking. Sensorial experiences are the base for thinking and creativity (Hannaford 1996). Increasing to diversity of our sensory surrounding and of our freedom to experience this, increases patterns we have for learning, thinking, and creativity.

If we meet *Here and Now* our bodies tell about our experiences. This is a simultaneous perceiving and expressing. When we talk our bodies divulge information on our state and attitude. When we walk we simultaneously perceive, decode, and make decisions about our daily environment and on acting in it. Perceiving and expressing are shared actions, not single actions. For example if people sit together and speak, they copy postures from each

other. We all know how contagious yawning or laughing is. Depending on our empathy we feel the sadness of the other in the breast or the anger in the stomach.

Joint walking increases the *intercorporal* existence of the group. This intercorporal existence is the basic human experience of relationship. In this intercorporal existence the constructed dualism of body and mind is disolved (Merleau-Ponty 1966). This existence contains all information of experiences and knowledge, and influences our feeling, thinking, and acting patterns.

In this intercorporal existence you can interpret the actions and intentions of other participants at anytime. A neurophysiological confirmation was found by Rizzolatti. If you perceive someone else doing something the corresponding mirror neuron might fire in your brain, allowing you to understand the other person's intentions. Rizzolatti discovered that in the pre-motoric area of the frontal lobes of monkeys certain cells will fire when a monkey performs a single, highly specific action with its hand (Rizzolatti 2001).

„To this phenomenological concept of intercorporal existence belongs the research on mirror neurons in the premotoric cortex. These neurons are activated if a person fulfils a certain movement as well as when a person perceives another person doing this movement. These mirror neurons build a system to connect perceived actions to one's own movements. The activation of the neurons make me capable to experience my and other actions as similar and to understand." (Fuchs 2003 translated by C.R.)

If people experience and understand mutually their behaving and acting they agree on a shared reality.

7.   EFFECTS OF COLLOCATED GROUPS FOR DECISION MAKING

Collocated groups are groups which meet at the same time at the same place and experience presence. Individuals of a collocated group repeat processes of their socialization in that specific situation (Dreitzel 1992). They use different behavior patterns which respond to the situation and to their personal history. The immediately experienced contact is like an encounter with the others and with objects. Maybe this process of contact is the condition for knowledge construction and for creativity. Lead back to theory I found research results about the design of encounter in different therapy approaches. Especially in the theories of contact processes in gestalt therapy (Dreitzel 1992) and in the theories about person-centered therapy (Schmidt 2004), as well as in qualitative and quantitative research about

empathy (Hakansson 2003, Batson 1997). There one interesting insight points out that personal development, common decisions of a group, occurs at the correspondence at a special point of encounter.

7.1 Important Effects of Collocated Groups for Participation

In participation processes it is necessary to enable every participant to have a personal contact with the personal daily environment and with other participants. This personal contact is only possible in the presence. Participants bring conflicting experiences and opinions to the meeting. In collocated groups personal perception and shared experiences are strengthened. Together we develop plans for the future. Collocated groups support decisions, because:

- Participants experience a personal development. Social interactions have an effect on personal development. The effects increase a self-organization of the group.
- Participants experience repeated processes of socialization. They experience improvement, enlargement, and confirmation of their behavior, attitude, and acting.
- The behavior of the participants depends more often on the actual situation than on previously developed thinking and feeling patterns. They speak more about current experiences and less about abstract opinions acquired from outside sources (Geser 1996).
- Collocated groups enable the emotional and cognitive conditions that information can be perceived attentively, can be decoded and integrated into the personal experience and acting. It will influence future action.

7.2 Decisions in Collocated Groups

Individuals are enabled to use different behavior patterns of existing. In the moved planning process for a meeting the participants start with mutual experiencing. Then the mental arrival at the current situation occurs. Mutual understanding and the exchange of bodily and verbal information is increasing. Corresponding bodily states partially synchronize their mental situation. Based on such correspondence we are able to reach a consensus for specific questions. Many opinions change without discussions. Anticipating the future is involved in this consensus (fig.1).
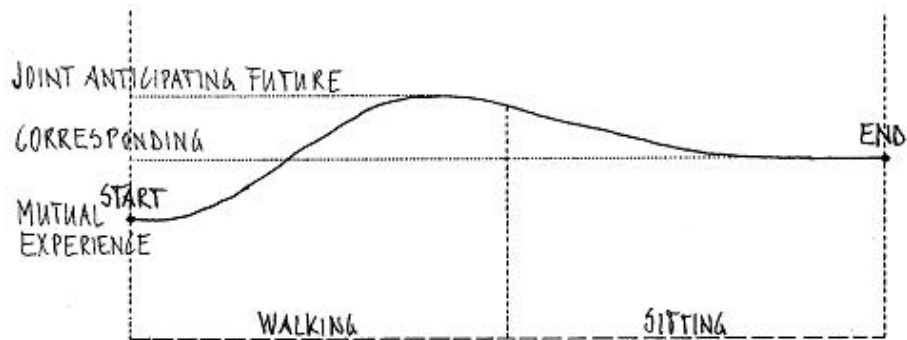
Figure 1. Interaction patterns during one meeting

The development of mutual experience and understanding leads to a correspondence, a consensus and concept. From physical and mental correspondence we reach a consensus because we "name" what we experienced. From unconscious experienced empathy we reflect and name what happened. We name what we perceived, and we name our joint expectations. At that point we anticipate the future, make decisions, and build conventions. The curve goes down at the end of the meeting when we name our tasks until the next meeting and end with an appreciative "good bye".

7.3   Support of the Dynamics by Collocated Groups

An essential part of this planning process is to recognize joint tasks and assign duties and responsibilities. The support of self perception, self-confidence, and joint activities leads to common decisions.

Immediately within the first meeting we realize small steps. Small successes support the process of decisions and acting, and create a shared self consciousness and a shared identity of the group. The shared self consciousness of the group accumulates over multiple interactions. Figure 2 shows this upward bound interaction patterns.
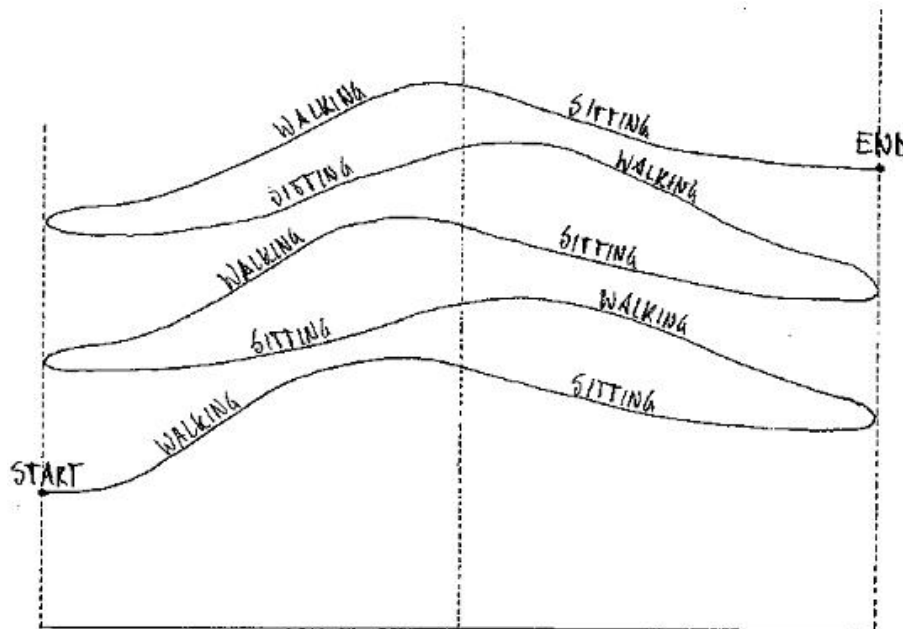
Figure 2. Spiral of interaction patterns during more meetings

In the course of multiple meetings subjective and objective meanings are developed, corrected, and confirmed:

- To each personal behavior belongs a shared behavior (Merleau-Ponty 1966);
- All arranged meanings and decisions are the result of intercorporal interactions. Personal and shared experiences replay this common meaning (Wirkus 2003);
- In intercorporal interactions objective decoding patterns are replaced with subjective understanding (Dreitzel 1992).
- Shared experiences, behavior, decisions and acting grow during this planning process.

7.4 Criteria for Decision Making

For decision making we have to create a corresponding interaction between the participants. This correspondence happens mostly intercorporal and nonverbal. A consensus usually is found nonverbally at first, and then their anticipations of the future are named.

If a social group builds a community *Here and Now* it is also an intercorporal community in the sense of Merleau-Ponty. This intercorporal community is important to reach a correspondence for decision making.

During the process of contact the personal development and the development of the group develop. Criteria for integrating new information in a personal acting are:

- we have to create a mutual understanding of expressing and perceiving persons;
- we need an identification with personal desires and expectations;
- we need the motivation to participate;
- we need a base for anticipating the future together.

Decisions are made without the usual procedure of collecting data, without making priorities or discussing our judgements. Decisions are made during the correspondence in the group.

For example: In a moved planning arrangement I organized a walk with people affected by a flood disaster. Many of the participants had their home flooded and their gardens destroyed. The aim of this walk was to see what happened, what was done and what has to be done in the future. One participant had replaced a tree trunk on a rebuilt dam. Before the flood there was an alley with very old lime trees and in the night of the flood they fell with horrible noises into the river. Everything was devastated. Some people were angry and hurt when they saw one of the tree trunk alleys there; they understood it as a bad joke. Others were happy and thought it would be a fitting monument. During the walk they could share their different feelings about the trunk. During the sitting period suddenly there was a correspondence in the group preceding the decision to keep this monument and to plant young lime trees. Two weeks later I passed the village and saw the young trees. The decision had lead to shared action and realization.

8.   COMBINATION   WITH   VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION

The process of contact (with correspondence, understanding and consensus) is the key to grasp new knowledge and integrate it into the personal decision and acting. It maybe is also the key for creativity and for developing new ideas together. Insights of encounter research show that in the process of contact in the correspondence the creation of new ideas is made possible.

The scientific community expect that electronic media facilitate participation planning. There are great hopes in virtual environments. My experiences and the analysis shown above point to fundamental aspects of human knowledge construction and decision making in groups.

To   combine   my   present   results   with   the   discussion   about Geocollaboration (Mac Eachren, Brewer 2004) I list *conditions for*

collaboration to enable successful group work. They list four contexts which should be supported:

- *knowledge construction*, to create meaning out of collaborative extraction of information;
- support of common *design* in the group;
- *group decisions* that use geospatial information;
- *training and education* – to advance group learning.

Knowledge construction and decision making in groups overarches all aimed tasks as common design, e-learning and participation. In the group encounters I have organized I have identified processes which were dependent on immediate, shared, and concrete experience. To achieve effective group work with geospatial information we have to ask how we can combine the common experience of concrete situations, the presence, with mediated information transfer.

For collaboration attention, among others, must be paid to:

- The connection of the virtual situation to concrete previous experience of participants so that they are able to integrate new contents and information into their personal experience, knowledge, and acting.
- For participating groups we need a stability of behavior that participants have a base for communication, mutual understanding and decision making.
- Interaction among participants should be structured to achieve often changing subgroups. Walking affects topology of connections, and form and flow of interaction (Mac Eachren and Brewer 2004). This is what I pointed out in my paper "Motion increases emotional correspondence" (Internal Report 2004).

To create a correspondence in a participating group, we could combine concrete meetings with virtual communication.

8.1 Integration of new Informations

During the concrete meetings people find the correspondence, the appropriate interaction style and terminology. Until the next meeting it is possible using this base.

Knowledge construction, decision making, sharing tasks, and the design of space happen in concrete meetings. Therefore we have to think about the intended tasks and different phases of contact during several communication processes of a planning process.

At the beginning of a planning process we need to get into contact. We are a heterogeneous group and a mutual experience in shared situations is

necessary to create a common base for developing ideas, or concepts about the development of a village:

- During the concrete meetings people find the correspondence and the appropriate interaction style, they define the next necessary steps and start with first realizations. We are able to integrate information and transform it into knowledge in a mutual understanding.
- The interaction style helps to make a successful virtual communication until the next meeting because people are able to remember their relationship and their behavior get stability. Virtual communication is achieved with email and sometimes web based platforms. There information transfer happens based on previous experienced relations and decisions.

8.2   Stability of Behavior in Virtual Groups

People have to remember the correspondence. This includes the memory on the shared communication style, about concrete experienced interactions and the memory on the effects of my acting on the group. Behavior changes slowly until the next meeting, the memory on the shared situation is fading.

The memorized correspondence is the condition to enable solutions of problems and a tolerance in frustration. In a corresponding system people can tolerated that not all their needs are fulfilled immediately. The participants know that there will be a right time, because the corresponding system gives support by the relations of the group.

They have the possibility to meet again, usually within a month, to further develop the patterns of the previous meeting. Out of the several meetings participants get motivation and discipline to communicate also virtually. This basic style of stable behavior is flexible enough for new questions.

8.3   Other Examples

In other fields conclusions are similar and stress the necessity of emotional correspondence (emotional integration) and knowledge construction. There are examples of person–centered learning to exploit the potentials of web based technologies to support learners in constructing pragmatic and persistent knowledge. They are based on the insight that pure transfer of information does not by itself imply the construction of knowledge. A whole-person-approach to learning including interpersonal values, acceptance of self and others, self confidence, creativity, and capabilities like communication skills has more chances for success.

Derntl and Motschnig-Pitrik (Department of Computer Science and Business Informatics, University of Vienna) made the experience that introducing person-centered learning is more demanding with respect to time and provision of resources than conventional learning. As necessary conditions for e-learning they name realness, acceptance, and empathic understanding. With the use of patterns they enable the reuse of personal-centered learning practices. One insight beside others is the combination of virtual information transfer with concrete meetings for knowledge construction.

9.   SUMMARY

A planning process occurs in a constructed reality. This reality must be shared among the participants of this planning process. Shared reality emerges out of interaction and communication in groups. I create a planning process in which information is emotionally and cognitively perceived and accepted.

During this planning process it is important to reach a correspondence between the participants. Joint activities like walking together through the daily environment develop a correspondence in the group. This leads to a shared reality and to common decisions and acting together. If people experience mutually their behaving and acting, their ways of existing, they reach a consensus. They agree to a common agreed reality, anticipate the future together, and come to common decisions.

Joint activities mean the experience of concrete situations *Here and Now*. Individuals repeat processes of their socialization in that specific situation. They experience improvement, enlargement and confirmation of their behavior, attitude and acting. They take new roles, new responsibilities. Self confidence is growing and supports the process of communication and decision making in the group.

The immediately experienced contact is like an encounter with the others and with objects in concrete situations. There one interesting insight, to which I want to pay more attention in my future work, pointing out that personal development, knowledge construction, common decisions of a group, occur at the emotional correspondence at a special point of encounter. Maybe this is the key to get insights what is possible in virtual communication (for example information transfer), and what has to be enabled in concrete situations.

For a virtual communication, all participants have to share a memory of real interactions. Virtual media have to support the dynamics: the participants of a group have the motivation and ability to encode and decode

information, independent from time and space, and to put it in the personal and common experience and acting.

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