Introduction: does Cohen-Emerique's approach need methodological innovation?

The "active ingredients" in Cohen-Emerique's method

Margalit Cohen-Emerique created her intercultural approach almost forty years ago, hence doubts about its effectiveness today inevitably arise. So much has changed in the last decades in terms of the demographic constitution of European societies (the original social context of the method was France), that the intercultural social dynamics are remarkably different. The political context may be much more polarized, marked by a particular use of identity politics[1] where arguments about identity threats win votes for the left or the right. Finally, the way we think about intergroup dynamics has also changed: a rising awareness of inequalities, of systematic discriminations requires a more critical approach to interculturality, ever more sensitive to the risk of disguising with cultural factors phenomena rooted in economics, poverty, or segregation. Can a method that had been devised before all this happened still work in this very different context?

Just as medicine have their 'active ingredients' – those elements that are responsible for the biological changes the drugs trigger, so do pedagogical methods, except that instead of provoking changes in our biology they trigger changes in the way we think, feel or behave. It may be interesting to start by identifying these active ingredients within the method Margalit Cohen-Emerique has created, even if we are not proposing a thorough presentation of the entire method[2].

1. "Decentering": We should anchor the search for the roots of a conflict or misunderstanding in our own values, norms and representations as opposed to immediately investigating what is "strange" in the other person. We can use our own emotional reactions to guide us in this search. This should allow us to realize that our emotional reactions are not direct consequences of the other person's behaviour (i.e., fault of the other person), but rather of the fact that we have different norms, values, expectations concerning that particular behaviour.

2. "Discovery of the frame of references of the other": Instead of offering easy accessible responses the method invites us to develop our capacity to envisage and look for alternative explanations using observation, applying systematic knowledge accumulated by the social sciences. This should allow us to go beyond our first interpretations of the other, which are often based on

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[1] **dentity politics** is a political approach wherein people of a particular gender, religion, race, social background, class or other identifying factors, develop political agendas that are based upon these identities. (last accessed on 7/12/2021 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_politics)

[2] You can find a more exhaustive presentation in our « Competence framework"

stereotypes and prejudice and which we may be tempted to confuse with reality ("It's not me who thinks the Parisians are arrogant, they are really so").

3. "Negotiation": We are encouraged to look beyond the specific positions we and our interaction partner took in the conflict, and explore the bigger picture: what are the larger hidden interests (values, norms) underneath the positions we expressed? Is it possible to find a common ground when we look at this big picture? Can we reformulate our positions based on the newly found common ground?

The ZELDA team believes that this set of three steps can be still very useful in approaching "the other", maybe more than ever. But we also believe that important changes in our context should not be simply discarded as irrelevant, rather considered specifically, exploring what kinds of adaptations they may require from us, to make sure the method can really do what it is meant to do: transcend rigid separations by an effort of understanding and recognizing each other as fellow humans. In the following we'll start by exploring three aspects of the changing context. We then offer a systematized overview of the types of methodological innovations members of the ZELDA team have come up with, to keep the approach up to date.

Keeping up a method with changing contexts

Changing the demographic basis of interculturality

In her own time, most of the critical incidents Cohen-Emerique analysed were culture shock experiences that professionals lived with migrants. Today, it is often members of the second generation that trigger the culture shock experiences. It is difficult to reach recent data, but in 2014 6% of EU population were people who had at least one migrant parent. The average hides very different realities, for instance that year the percentage was 14,3 for France, 11 for Belgium, 2,5 for Italy and 1,5 for Hungary[3]. We also have to add that most of the 6% are migrants from other EU countries. Future trends may bring more diversity: in France for instance the proportion of newborns who have at least one parent born outside of the EU went from 19% to 28% in the two decades between 1999 to 2019. Cohen-Emerique already identified expectations towards acculturation as a sensitive zone. Now even more we'll need to consider the identity dynamics of second and third generation descendants of migrants. This change may be very visible in terms of the types of incidents, but we do not feel it is a game-changer in terms of the method. Whether it is a particular cultural identity that is the root of a cultural misunderstanding, or the dynamics of intergroup identity or identity change, the three steps detailed above still provide a valuable guide to go beyond mere stereotypes and prejudice in approaching the other.

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[3] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=First_and_second-generation_immigrants_-_statistics_on_main_characteristics#Context

Changing social representations about diversity

All over Europe and beyond, in the Euro-Atlantic cultural space we see a growing polarisation taking identity as the center of the dispute. On the one hand, there is the rise of those who seem to be determined to cast off the shackles of the politically-correct and return to presumably outmoded collective identities, searching salvation in aggressive nationalism, in traditional gender roles and in essentialist conceptions of race and ethnicity with a return of the long forgotten or maybe just suppressed ghost of white supremacy. On the other hand, resistance to these threats is louder and more determined than ever. Black Lives Matter have spurred the imagination of young people well beyond the US. Decolonising (our education, our institutions and our minds) is back on the agenda not only pushed by the radical militants but largely accepted by the supporting middle classes. In the middle of these clashes there is growing uncertainty: how to handle difference in way that is respectful of diversity, radically opposing racism, still open to social dialogue in order to prevent the fabric of our societies from being irreparably torn. These are not just philosophical and political questions belonging to the high spheres of academia and left to be handled by the political elite. These landslide social and cultural changes are quite visible in intercultural trainings. Our age demands ever greater awareness and presence with respect to the dynamics it presents to us, requires us to take a stand on issues such as identity or coexistence in multicultural contexts that inevitably affect us all. Trainers often become witness of voluntary or involuntary identity threats in their student groups without knowing how to react to these. Worse, they might find themselves in the eye of the storm, being accused of racism, sexism or of other exclusionary attitudes without understanding how they got into that position.

Changing expectations towards trainings

Time

When Margalit Cohen-Emerique started to deliver trainings for professionals of the social field, she had between nine to fifteen days to work through the steps of her method. Today, it is only in exceptional circumstances that some of us have ten days at their disposal for the delivery of the training. Most of us are requested to transmit the method in five or three days. And lately we have been receiving more and more requests to deliver one day long awareness-raising sessions. Such a shrinking of the available time has forced us to rethink the priorities of the pedagogical objectives and the methods that could help us achieve them[4].

Pedagogy

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[4] For the three days long learninbg path see « Short training based on MCE method" LINK IO2

Recent developments in education science brought more and more awareness to the fact that learning outcomes do not depend on the activity of the trainer so much as on the activity of the participants (Barbier)[5]. Therefore, trainers in all fields have endeavored making their learning experience more active, more experiential. In addition, in our intercultural field we had one more reason for a more experiential transformation. As the need for political correctness gained a wider recognition, and deviation from it was punished or stigmatized ('racist' 'extreme rightist' etc.) people have tried to conform to this new expectation acquiring some of the vocabulary, but mostly by not daring to address underlying questions. If expressing opinions or even questions that did not seem completely politically correct became more and more risky, it is only logical that people stopped asking them openly, even in intercultural trainings. This recognition led us to reconsider the pedagogical landscape we proposed in our trainings. It is maybe on this level that the changes proposed are most remarkable with respect to the original method. The first two steps of the original training Cohen-Emerique proposed could be pretty much delivered to a group sitting around a table. It is only for the third step, *Negotiation*, that she proposed a complex role play that was filmed and then analyzed. Today, in our own learning paths elements of theatre, movement, role games, structured exercises and films offer a much more varied learning experience.

Target groups

Cohen-Emerique's primary intention with her intercultural approach was to alleviate the work of professionals in the social field and through them contribute to a better quality of reception, care, and accompaniment for the people in need of such assistance. Accordingly, the method was not intended as an education tool to be used directly in the training of members of minorities, migrants who were not at the same time professionals of these professional fields. However, some of us did see the potential impact of the method if we made it accessible for a non-professional audience. Offering the tools for a better understanding or management of intercultural dynamics to migrants and members of minority could give the impression that imply a shift in responsibility: that members of groups already in a difficult situation should also take in charge the management of the relationship with professionals representing the state. This was certainly not our intention. However, we do think that developing a sense of understanding and a sense of control can stimulate individual or collective resilience. In line with this conviction, we have proposed some activities which we think can transmit the "active ingredients" of the method even for people who may not be professionals of the social or educational sectors, or who may not have an experience of Western-style higher or secondary education.

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[5] Learning always takes place as a combination of the initiative of the trainer and the trainee (this is also taught to us by biology with the concept of "structural coupling" (Maturana-Varela), or quantum physics, and perhaps even poetry. Through the activity of thought and attribution of meaning of the subjects during the training activities, the basic concepts that each individual can translate into his own reality can be activated or revealed. But this is not enough! If we consider the human being in his totality, we must enhance, alongside the activities of thought, also the emotional aspects and bodily interactivity. Only in this way, in our opinion, learning will be complete, lasting and therefore also replicable and transferable.

The structure of the toolkit

Scope of resources: focus on the steps or the method or sensitive zones

The resources we offer in this collection address one of two pedagogical needs: making the transmission of the three steps of the method more effective, or making the deconstruction of a sensitive zone more interactive. For this reason, the method papers or activity sheets are either classified according to the steps of the method (Decentring, Discovery of the frame of references of the other, Negotiation) or under a sensitive zone (belief system, status, face, gender).

Types of resources: methodological papers and activity sheets

Our toolkit includes two types of contributions: methodological papers and activity sheets. Methodological papers tackle new additions to the method to address specific sensitive zones that we identified (i.e., faith diversity and status) or exploring the fusion with other existing methods (the use of forum theatre). Activity sheets offer step by step description of concrete activities that we have developed or adapted to address training needs concerning one of the three steps of the method or a sensitive zone.

	Type of contribution:	Methodological papers:	Activity sheets: descriptions of activities in a practical step-by-step way
In support of the presentation of one of the three steps of MCE's approach	1. Decentering		100% Bahiano (RUAH) Babelgium (CBAI) Cultionary (CBAI) Decentering with images (élan) Demechanisation exercises (Artemisszio) Epitaph (RUAH) Geo-localising maps (RUAH) Icebergs for culture shocks (elan) Intercultural curriculum (RUAH) The Rant (RUAH) The tree of wooden clogs (RUAH)

	2. Discovery of the frame of references of the other		C'est l'histoire d'un belge (RUAH) Exploring patterns (Artemisszio) The cookie Thief (Artemisszio)
	3. Negotiation	Use of forum theatre in MCE's approach (Artemisszio)	C'est l'histoire d'un belge (RUAH) The Egg Business (Artemisszio) Marais (CBAI) Use of forum theatre for practicing negotiation (Artemisszio)
In support of the exploration of a sensitive zone	Worldview, rationality, belief system	Working with faith diversity (CBAI)	Grid to prepare negotiation of incidents in religious diversity - work on concrete cases (CBAI)
	Status	Status and power differences in MCE trainings (élan)	Welcoming diversity (élan) Brave and creative learning spaces (élan) Status thermometer (élan) Wokeberg (élan)
	Face		Facework (élan)
	Gender		Gender and diversity (élan) Exploring gender (CBAI)